Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources

Hon. Colin Maxwell
Minister

Parks Branch

Makwa Lake Provincial Park

Report 86 - 21 b

December 1986

MAKWA LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK
PUBLIC INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Prepared for

PARKS BRANCH
SASKATCHEWAN PARKS AND RENEWABLE RESOURCES
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN

1986

by: Hilding O. Franson, B.A., M.Sc., MCIP,
Recreation Consultant
Regina, Saskatchewan

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1. SUMMARY

Makwa Lake Provincial Park was established in 1986 adjacent to the Makwa and Jumbo Lakes near the village of Loon Lake, Saskatchewan. Redesignation of the former Makwa Lake Recreation Site as a new Provincial Natural Environment Park will bring about renewed interest in the natural environment and the wide variety of outdoor recreation activities which can be pursued in this part of the province.

The Park will serve local residents as well as tourists attracted to and passing through the region. It can serve as a regional destination area offering a wide variety of quality outdoor recreational opportunities. The area has been recognized for its outstanding natural features since early settlement of the area and had been considered as a potential Provincial Park since the 1940's and 1950's.

This document summarizes the resource values and recreational features of the area, existing and potential recreational uses, and suggests further development opportunities within the Park.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Previous Plans and Development

The Makwa Lake Recreation Site was officially established in July, 1984, comprising 6,318 acres (2,557 ha.) of provincial crown land in the Makwa Lakes area. Two separate sectors were included, one on the north side of Makwa Lake, west of Highway 26, and the second fronting primarily on the two Jumbo Lakes west and south of Makwa Lake.

A number of separate sites have been developed for public and private recreational activities over the past thirty years, recognizing local interests initially, then expanding to meet the needs of a wider market and tourists as the area became more accessible and better known. Initial development of crown lands was in the form of cottage subdivisions rather than public day-use or camping facilities.

Initial cottage development in the Makwa Lakes area first appeared in the 1930's. The local branch of the Canadian Legion leased 19.9 acres of land from the Loon Lake Indian Band in August 1933 at the extreme south end of Makwa Lake. This site had one of the best sand beaches on all six lakes in the Makwa chain of lakes, and had a mature stand of attractive white spruce offering shade and shelter for camping, day-use and cottages. This cottage and commercial resort development was subsequently taken over by Mr. Roy Longdo in 1948 and eventually became known as Longdo's Beach.

In 1947, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) surveyed 25 lots for summer cottages on provincial crown land immediately adjacent to the western limits of this development (Makwa Resort Subdivision Blocks 3 and 4). By August, 1948, all lots were sold and a new 41 lot subdivision was surveyed by DNR on the southeast side of Little Jumbo Lake. (Makwa Resort Subdivision, Blocks 1 and 2). This development included a small public camping area as well as a public beach and picnic area.

By June, 1949, 38 of these lots had been taken and there appeared to be a demand for more. A development plan was recommended for the entire area between the Loon Lake Indian Reserve and Jumbo Lake and the Loon Lake Board of Trade was agitating for a Provincial Park. With such rapid growth and increasing summer tourism DNR recognized the need for long range planning, especially improved campgrounds and additional cottage lots.

Midway between the first two subdivisions and on land completely separated from the shoreline of either Little Jumbo or Makwa Lake, 23 additional lots were surveyed in 1949 (Block 5). In 1950 another small cottage area was established by DNR on crown lands on the northeast shore of Makwa Lake where Highway 26 passes close to the edge of the lake (NE 10, SW 15, Twp 59, Rg 22, W 3rd. M). By 1956, approximately 41 cottages were located at Longdo's

Beach, (on the Indian Reserve) and 67 were located within the various DNR subdivisions. The growth of cottages was slow but steady despite the relative inaccessibility of the area from larger populations to the south.

The majority of the cottage owners resided within 50 miles of the resort. Makwa Lake was far less accessible in the 1950's and 60's than it is today. Other areas such as Waskesiu, Emma and Christopher Lakes were more accessible from the larger centers of Prince Albert, Saskatoon and North Battleford. In 1955, for example, there was no direct access to Lloydminster, as there is now via H
ighways 17, 3 and 26. Similarly there were no direct links between Makwa Lake and larger Alberta centers such as Edmonton.

In 1956 DNR commissioned recreation consultant W.M. Baker to undertake a major study of the recreation potential of the northwest part of the province. Baker's contract terms called for the identification of only one Provincial Park in the region. At that time there were only nine provincial parks in Saskatchewan, all of which were in the eastern half of the province, except for Cypress Hills in the extreme southwest. Baker's evaluation of the natural resources concluded in the recommendation of a Provincial Park on the Waterhen River (now Meadow Lake Provincial Park) but he gave special attention to the great potential of the Makwa Lakes area as well.

Baker advised that the Makwa Lakes area was one of the areas in the region that "contained the finest natural potential for public park developments." Because of the natural environment and the location with respect to major population centers in the province, Baker concluded that any park here would be of the "wilderness" type suited only for extended periods of vacation for the majority of Saskatchewan residents. It could serve local and regional recreation needs, however the majority of use would be drawn from outside the immediate area.

He concluded in 1956 that the pattern of land ownership was "one of the major obstacles to the development of extensive recreation facilities of a full scale Provincial Park at Makwa." His reason was that the Loon Lake Indian Reserve commanded the central position of the lands immediately around the lakes. Most of the total shoreline and the finest natural beaches were on Indian lands rather than provincial crown lands.

Although a Provincial Park was not proposed at that time, Baker did recommend a number of improvements such as the access road from Loon Lake to the historic Steele Narrows, together with appropriate viewpoint and interpretive facilities; improvements to the Little Jumbo Lake area; campgrounds and picnic areas; channel improvements between lakes; development controls to protect the natural environment; and afforestation of selected sites for future recreation development.

Baker concluded that the cottage subdivisions had already curtailed long term public development potential and that replanning of the area would be necessary, including the establishment of a new public area at the south end of Big Jumbo Lake. Baker noted that the existing Little Jumbo Beach site was too small to meet the long term demands expected in the area for public recreation.

A number of improvements to the Little Jumbo Beach site were recommended, including improved building standards, landscaping, picnicking facilities, improved roads and parking, boat launch and dock, and greater separation of private cottage and public facilities.

The Department of Natural Resources initiated public recreation development in the early 1960's, first at Pine Cove, then at the Mewasin and Jumbo Beach sites. Many of Baker's recommendations were followed.

By 1970, the Loon Lake Indian Band had established their own Development Company, and taken back the administration of Longdo's Beach Resort. A large expansion of the cottage subdivision on the Indian Reserve was indirectly supported by DNR with a policy to concentrate upon public day-use and camping facilities rather than expand subdivisions on the crown lands. The major development at Stabler Point was initiated in 1971 and has continued with expansions in the late 1970's and 1980's.

The idea of a golf course at Makwa Lake has been promoted locally for many years. The Loon Lake Board of Trade applied to lease provincial crown land for a golf course in 1960 and DNR responded by undertaking a topographic survey of the proposed site in 1961 and suggested a course layout for 9 holes. Sufficient financial resources could not be raised locally to proceed and the golf course project was postponed.

The idea of a golf course was raised again in 1966 and off-and-on until the present. The concept of a Regional Park was suggested as a means to obtain adequate funding but other priorities, lack of local capital and indecision about the long term plans for the area proved to be major obstacles.

Discussions relating to the establishment of a provincial recreation site at Makwa Lake continued in the 1960's and crown lands were transferred from the administration of the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources as part of the Bronson Provincial Forest. Over the years, the future management of the natural resources has been a cause for concern by forestry, fisheries and wildlife officials. A number of boundary proposals were made in the 1970's before final agreements were reached and the Makwa Lake Recreation Site was officially proclaimed by Order-in-Council in 1984.

2.2 Park Classification and Purpose

Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources presented a White Paper on the Parks Act in 1984. Although a network of 17 Provincial Parks and over three hundred Recreation Sites, Regional Parks and Protected Areas, had been established since the 1930's, it was hoped that the existing system of park lands could become better known, appreciated and used.

It was also clear that the establishment of additional Provincial Parks was needed to fully represent the natural and cultural diversity of the province and to provide a greater range of recreational opportunities in all seasons of the year to all residents and visitors.

Recreation Sites and Regional Parks provide recreational opportunities and facilities for local residents and a more limited portion of the travelling public. Recreation Sites are typically small areas focused on a particular activity or facility. They are generally not of overall provincial significance from a resource protection or management viewpoint, like Provincial Parks.

Provincial Parks are usually large areas of land and water where the high quality of the natural historic and/or prehistoric resources combine to make the area provincially significant. The Parks are dedicated to the people of Saskatchewan and visitors to the province for their enjoyment and the cultural, educational and social benefits that may be derived from them, for this and future generations. All Parks are established to achieve the dual purpose of recreational use and resource protection, while contributing to the provincial economy. It was apparent that the former Makwa Lake Recreation Site would be more appropriately designated as a Provincial Park.

One of the major provisions of the Parks Act is to identify a classification of Provincial Parks for the purpose of creating a greater public awareness of the primary purpose of individual parks and therefore a more appropriate understanding and use of the area; and a more clear and comprehensive approach to park planning, development and use.

Four classes of Provincial Parks are now identified: Wilderness Parks; Natural Environment Parks; Recreation Parks and Historic Parks. As a new Natural Environment Park, Makwa Lake will be developed and used in a manner distinctly different from the other three classes of Provincial Parks. The criteria used to differentiate this class of park from the others include: primary purpose, objectives, recreational activities, accessibility, visitor facilities and services, commercial activity, and resource management strategies.

The primary purposes of the Makwa Lake Provincial Park will be: (i) to protect a representative landscape of this part of

the province which displays a variety of ecological and geological characteristics and features (The Thickwood Uplands Natural Region); (2) to provide a large tract of land which has high potential for a wide variety of recreational activities that are largely dependent upon the natural environment setting; and (3) to encourage a wide segment of the public to come to the Park and to enjoy and experience the out-of-doors.

Makwa Lake Provincial Park is sufficiently large to ensure protection of the environment and allow natural processes to continue with little interference by people. It will preserve characteristic topographic, geologic, hydrologic and biologic features of the region for public interest and enjoyment. The Park will encourage visitation by local residents and tourists who want to pursue outdoor activities and experiences.

Interpretive facilities, trails and markers will provide opportunities for the public to gain a better understanding of the natural environment represented by the Park, and the value of outdoor recreation in such a natural setting.

Only recreational activities with an outdoor focus and a moderate level of facility support will be encouraged. Activities may include camping, picnicking, swimming, hiking, cross country skiing, horseback riding, boating, fishing, sailing, canoeing, photography and nature study. Non-motorized travel within the Park will be encouraged; motorized vehicles will be restricted to designated areas. Commercial activities will be limited to essential services needed to provide visitors with a diversity of outdoor recreation experiences in keeping with the natural environment of the Park.

2.3 Regional Context

2.3.1 Location

The Makwa Lake Provincial Park is located in Townships 58 and 59, Ranges 22 and 23, West of the Third Meridian. Portions of the Park include land on Makwa Lake, Little Jumbo Lake, Big Jumbo Lake, Perch Lake and Goose Lake, west of the Village of Loon Lake.

The village of Loon Lake is located near the southern end of Makwa Lake approximately 60 km. west of Meadow Lake and 165 km. north of North Battleford. Access to the Makwa Lakes area is via Highways 4 and 26 from North Battleford, Highways 17, 3 and 26 from Lloydminster, and Highways 55 or 3 from Prince Albert. [Figure 1]

The northern (Pine Cove) sector of the Park is located 8 km north of Loon Lake, west of Highway 26. The more developed southern sector of the Park can be reached via provincial grid route 699 west of Loon Lake. This sector includes Jumbo Beach, Mewasin Beach and the Stabler Point developments. The Steele Narrows Provincial Historic Park is situated 15 km. west of Loon Lake immediately adjacent to route 699 where it crosses the channel between Tullibee Lake (Sanderson Bay) and Upper Makwa Lake.(Figure 2)

Figure 1
110°
109°
55°
54°
53°
Hills
PRIMROSE LAKE
AIR WEAPONS RANGE
N
MAKWA LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK
50 km
100 km
150 km
Cold Lake
Grand Centre
Medley
Meadow Lake
Loon Lake
St Walburg
Paradise Hill
Lloydminster
Kitscoty
Marwayne
Turtleford
Glaslyn
Maidstone
Marshall
Lashburn
Edam
Spiritwood
Leoville
Big River
Debden
Canwood
Marcelin
North Battleford
Battleford
Cut Knife
Edgerton
Chauvin
Provost
Radisson
Saskatoon
Asquith
Biggar
Kilometres
Between Dots
Between Communities, Junctions, and City Limits
Kilometres
Produced by Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation, 1985
Queen's Printer

2.3.2 Regional Perspective

The Makwa Lake drainage basin includes a number of smaller water bodies including Ministikwan Lake and Creek, Upper and Lower Tullibee Lakes, Little and Big Jumbo Lakes. The Makwa River, the outlet of Makwa Lake, joins the Beaver River northwest of the Town of Meadow Lake, and the Beaver ultimately joins the Churchill River system at Ile-a-la Crosse.

Meadow Lake Provincial Park, located a long the Waterhen River 50 km. north of Loon Lake, is the only major park area in the region. Bronson Forest Recreation Site, 40 km. to the southwest, is a smaller, less developed recreation area which complements the resources of the region. Improvements have been made at Ministikwan, Peck and Little Fishing Lakes within the Bronson Forest area.

While the Meadow Lake Natural Environment Park has a number of outstanding recreational features and attractions, the Makwa Lakes area has been very popular as a summer resort area for decades. Visitors are attracted to the Makwa area because of its natural features, namely the lakes and adjacent forest, and their attractiveness for fishing, boating, swimming, camping and picnicking.

During the 1950's and 60's access to Prince Albert National Park, Waskesiu, Emma, and Christopher Lakes was much better from larger centers such as Prince Albert and Saskatoon. Highway improvements throughout the region have made these cities as well as Lloydminster, North Battleford and Edmonton much more accessible to the Makwa Lakes. Heavy oil development in the Cold Lake, Alberta and Lloydminster--North Battleford regions will result in a larger market area population in the future. The Yellowhead Highway and its increasing volume of tourist traffic is also now within the market area of Makwa Lake Provincial Park.

2.3.3 Size of Park

The Provincial Park is comprised of two segments. The smaller northern portion, which surrounds the Pine Cove Resort subdivision and picnic ground adjacent to Highway 26, contains approximately 1000 acres (405 ha.). This area includes five miles (8 km.) of northern shoreline of Makwa Lake west of the highway and north of the Loon Lake Indian Reserve, No. 129B.

The southern portion of the Park is considerably larger, containing approximately 5,318 acres (2,153 ha.) of land with portions of the shorelines of Makwa, Little Jumbo, Big Jumbo, Perch and Goose Lakes.

With a total land area in excess of 6,300 acres (2,550 ha.) the Park is of sufficient size to meet the outdoor recreation needs of visitors as well as sustain and protect the natural environment.

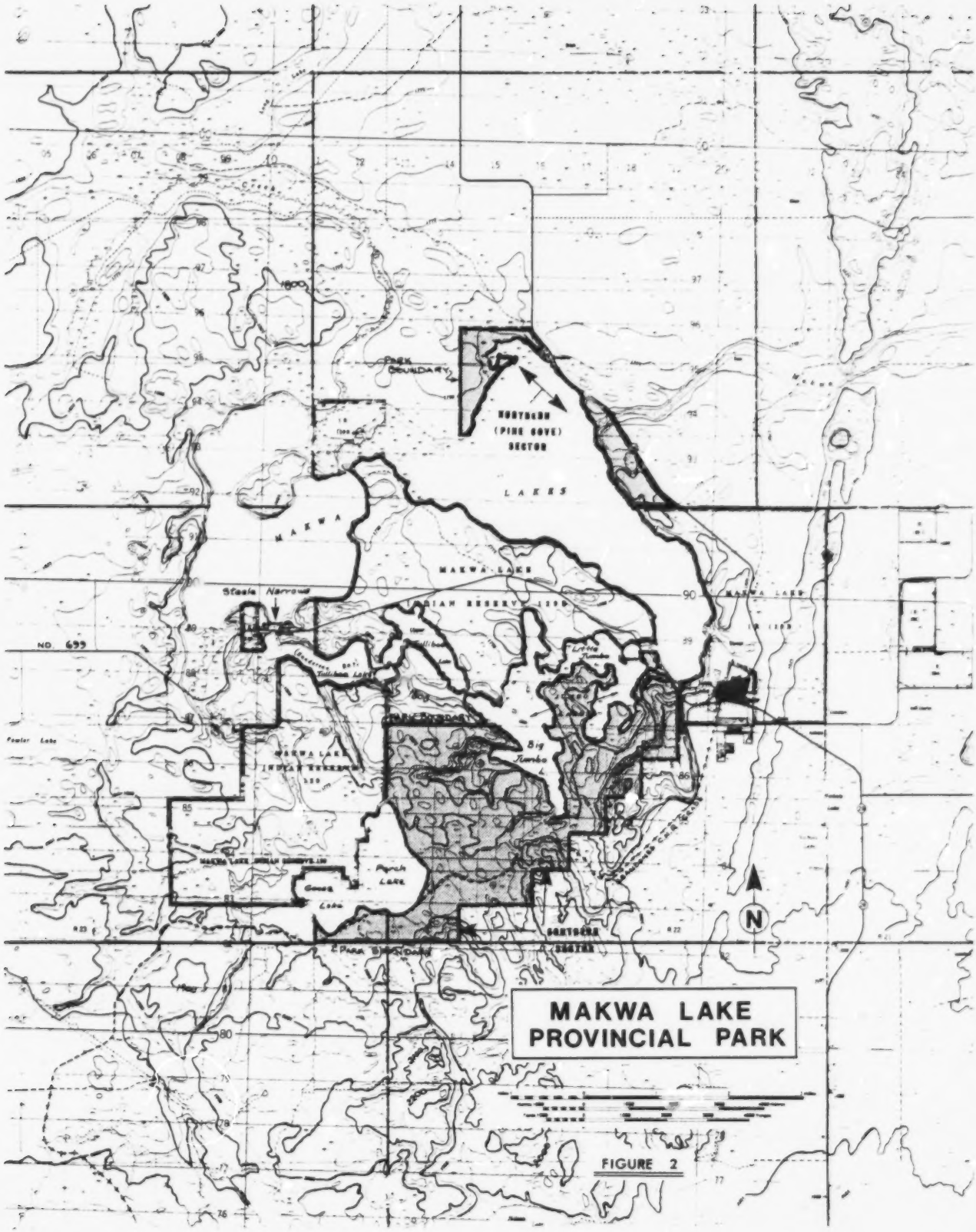
PARK BOUNDARY
NORTHERN (PINE COVE) SECTOR
LAKES
MAKWA
MAKWA LAKE
Steele Narrows
INDIAN RESERVE
NO. 699
Big Jimbo L.
N
SOUTHERN SECTOR
MAKWA LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK

FIGURE 2

3. RESOURCE INFORMATION

3.1 Historical Review

Initial concerns regarding receding lake levels in the mid 1930's resulted in the construction of a wooden control structure on the Makwa River in 1938. The purpose of this dam, constructed and operated by the Department of Natural Resources, was to raise the level of the lakes 1.5 to 2 feet to improve fishing conditions and spawning grounds and to afford water connections for boats between the chain of lakes. It was during this period that private cottages first appeared in the area.

With cottage subdivisions established by DNR in the late 1940's and early 1950's, use of the area for outdoor recreation became well established.

By 1962 the old dam on the Makwa River served little purpose in controlling lake levels. In 1963 the original structure was replaced by the Conservation and Development Branch of the Department of Agriculture some 1500 feet downstream of the 1938 structure. Conflicts arose over optimum lake levels between cottagers, fishermen and boaters and the Loon Marsh area used for hay production ten miles downstream, to the east. Hydrology studies indicated that optimum Makwa Lake levels during the recreation season (July and August) was 1,718.5 feet. DNR assumed the responsibility of controlling the new dam.

3.2 Natural Features

3.2.1 Geology

The entire area is underlain by relatively level bedded palaeozoic rock formations over which a deep mantle of glacial drift was deposited during the pleistocene epoch thousands of years ago.

Although the actual bedrock formations are masked by this deep mantle of glacial deposits, regional structural controls are observable on the palaeozoic formations due to the presence of a northern extension of the Missouri Coteau. This escarpment, which roughly follows the line of the 2,000 foot contour and runs in a north-south direction across the landscape, has been breached at points by pre-glacial valleys carved by rivers flowing to the east.

During the glacial periods, ice sheets moved southwesterly across the region. The resultant post-glacial relief, which with the exception of the face of the Coteau, is entirely dependent upon inequalities in deposition and erosion of the glacial tills, is of a subdued order. A pattern of alternating hills, valleys, sloughs and plains is characteristic of the terrain except where the Coteau is evident.

3.2.2 Physiography

While the topographic relief of the till plains varies from 25 to 100 feet, the Coteau provides a much greater variety of topographical configuration which greatly enhances the scenic qualities of the region. The Coteau, the sheer face of which has been masked by a belt of irregular and tumbled morainic hills where lakes of considerable recreation potential are entrapped, provides an impressive framework to the physical setting. This is particularly noticeable in the Loon Lake area where the lakes and the edge of the Coteau lie in very close proximity.

The network of streams and lakes in the Makwa area is associated with the Churchill River drainage system. The Makwa chain of lakes, lying at an elevation of 1,720 feet above sea level, is situated at the base of the Missouri Coteau face. Elevations on top of the Coteau (part of the Thickwood Uplands Natural Region of Saskatchewan) exceed 2,000 feet. Strands of linear morainic ridges, together with steep sided conical hills (kames) and thick deposits of ground moraine extend northward from the face of the escarpment across the Makwa Lakes area. The pattern of these depositional features is responsible for the irregular outline of the lakes and frequent marked elevational differences in the terrain. Both of these features add considerably to the picturesque landscape.

Due to the roughness of the topography, frequent open water sloughs, poorly drained lowlands and depressions and the rocky or bouldery nature of many of the till soils, the land immediately surrounding these lakes is not suitable for agriculture. Forestry, wildlife, and recreation are more desirable uses of the area.

The Makwa Lakes consist of six water bodies of varying sizes and shapes lying irregularly in a circular configuration. The six lakes, combined, cover an area of nearly 16 square miles (10,200 acres or 4,130 ha.) and have a total shoreline of nearly 60 miles (95 km.).

The mantle of glacial tills in the Makwa Lakes area contains a high proportion of stones and large boulders. along the edges of the lakes, wave action has removed most of the finer materials to leave bouldery shorelines. Over 80 percent of the shoreline on all six lakes can be considered bouldery.

Marsh and swampy conditions prevail on about 13 percent of the shoreline with most shallow areas on the two larger lakes. These areas are important as fish, bird and animal habitats, although not directly attractive for outdoor recreation.

Of the total shoreline of all six lakes, less than seven percent can be considered to be natural sand beaches. Natural sand beaches which are of sufficient length and width to serve as major

day-use centers of activity are few in number on the lakes. The majority of these beaches are located on the Loon Lake Indian Reserve #129 and/or have been developed for private cottage/resort uses. The two most attractive beaches on the Indian Reserve are located on the east side of Upper Makwa Lake and at the extreme south end of Makwa Lake where the Makwa Lake Resort (formerly Longdo's Beach) is located.

Within the Makwa Lake Provincial Park only a few small sand beaches have developed naturally. Mewasin Beach, at the south end of Big Jumbo Lake, is one of the more attractive natural bathing beaches.

Other small beaches include 'Small Bay', on the north side of Stabler Point which extends into the western side of Little Jumbo Lake; 'Beaver Dam Bay' and 'Sandy Bay' on the east side of Big Jumbo lake. The close proximity of the latter two beaches, each of which exceeds 1,000 feet in length, suggests possible joint use of the forested backshore.

Jumbo Beach, although fairly low in natural potential, was the most heavily used public beach in the former Makwa Lake Recreation Site. This beach is the most accessible from the cottage subdivisions and is the most visible and accessible to tourists and day-visitors. The beach has been enhanced through the placement of imported sand and other support facilities.

Makwa Lake and Upper Makwa Lake, with a combined area of 13 square miles (8,350 acres or 3,380 ha.) are of sufficient size to permit all forms of boating and sailing. The four smaller lakes in the chain, while too small for many larger boats, can be navigated by canoes and smaller boats at most times. The fact that all lakes in the chain are interconnected by natural channels enhances their appeal. Only one sizeable portage (150 m.) is required, between Big Jumbo Lake and Upper Tullibee Lake to complete the entire circular route.

3.2.3 Climate

Outdoor recreation habits are largely a function of climatic conditions associated with the seasons of the year. The climate is semi-arid to sub-humid characterized by relatively warm, short summers and long, cold winters. Due to the northerly latitudes, relative to the more settled parts of southern Saskatchewan, the advent of summer is delayed somewhat and fall usually arrives earlier. Cooler evenings are prevalent in all seasons.

Precipitation averages 16.3 inches (41 cm.) with sixty percent of it falling during the normal growing season, April 30 to September 30. On average there are only 60 to 65 frost free days. Mean annual snowfall is 40 inches (102 cm.). Mean January

temperatures are in the range of -20 C to -22 C with a mean minimum of -29 C.

The short summer season is more conducive to enjoyment of the out-of-doors in the Makwa Lake area. Mean daytime high temperatures in July are 23.9 C (75 F) and mean July minimum temperatures are 15.5 C (50 F). Maximum temperatures of 36 to 38 C have been recorded occasionally.

Prevailing winds are from the west and northwest with maximum velocities recorded in the winter months. The rolling topography and forests have a moderating influence on the winds.

3.2.4 Soils

Within the mixed wood section of the Northern Provincial Forest, a variety of soils have developed dependent upon factors such as the type of glacial deposits, their post-glacial modification, if any, topography, and the interaction of climate and natural vegetation over hundreds of years.

The higher elevations of the Thickwood Hills Uplands to the south of the Makwa Lakes as well as the morainic hills surrounding them, are covered by typical forest soils. Gray Wooded (Luvisolic) soils developed on the moderately coarse to moderately fine textured glacial tills. These are dominant in the area. Gleysolic and Organic soils occur in the poorly drained depressional sites and muskeg areas.

On the northeast side of Makwa Lake on either side of the Makwa River there are Grey and Brownish-Grey Podzol Associations on mixed soils of till and glacio-fluvial deposits. These include the 'Loon River' Association with its grey loam to clay loams on low-lime boulder clays and the 'Bodmin' Association with its Grey gravelly-coarse sandy loams on glacio-fluvial deposits. Mixed areas of meadow, shallow peat and bog soils occur along the Ministikwan River and marshy areas at the northwest corner of Makwa Lake.

The soils of the Makwa Lake area are generally not suitable for agriculture. Forestry, wildlife, outdoor recreation and nature appreciation are more appropriate land uses.

3.2.5 Vegetation

This part of the province falls within the Mixedwood Ecodistrict of the Southern Boreal Ecoregion of Saskatchewan. Trembling Aspen and Black Poplar occupy the greatest area in the Makwa region, with trees 40 feet or less in height in many areas. Occasional stands of white spruce or white (paper) Birch are encountered, providing a welcome and valuable recreational resource.

The Makwa Lake Recreation Site was formerly managed and administered as the most north-easterly sector of the Bronson Provincial Forest. With improved forest fire suppression over the past thirty to fifty years, natural succession has lead to greater maturity of the forests and more climax species evident. Continued forest management and reforestation practices can improve the more visible and accessible recreation areas.

Aspen poplar is the dominant forest species in the Makwa area due to the prevalence of fires in decades past. Climax species such as white spruce have not been able to succeed. Clumps of paper birch are sparsely distributed within the Park area, but stands have not matured.

Jack pine is fairly extensive in the sandy burnt-over areas, generally some distance from the lake shores. Natural regeneration of white spruce has been extremely poor in the area. (The most attractive stand of mature white spruce in the area occurs at the south end of Makwa Lake on the Indian Reserve.) Black spruce, tamarack, willow and other bog/swamp species occur in the lower, poorly drained depressions. Hazelnut, alder, saskatoon, blueberry, buffalo berry, roses and grasses are also found where soil and climatic conditions are more favourable.

Baker's 1956 recreation report, recommended a major reforestation program to ensure a greater variety of species such as white spruce and birch, and more scenic attractiveness to the forested areas.

While the dominant forest cover in the area remains to be trembling aspen (poplar), the variety provided by occasional stands of jack pine, white spruce, birch and the lowland/bog communities creates a pleasant and scenic environment around the chain of lakes and over the rolling terrain.

3.2.6 Aquatic

The most important fish species in the Makwa Lakes include lake whitefish, northern pike, yellow perch, walleye and lake cisco. Sport fishing throughout the area has been good for many years. Tourists and local visitors have been attracted to the chain of Makwa Lakes for angling since they were first encountered. Angling pressures have reduced the size of the average fish taken, but 'success' has remained possible with continued management of the fishery resource.

Commercial fishing has taken place in Makwa Lake off and on over the past 30 years with small catches of whitefish. Commercial fishing is of limited significance however, from either a local or provincial economic viewpoint.

Before the establishment of the first control structure on the Makwa River in 1938, natural spawning areas were hindered by

low and fluctuating lake levels. Management of the fisheries resources has improved considerably since the original wooden structure was replaced in 1964.

3.2.7 Wildlife

Because the Makwa Lakes area is very close to the transition zone between the Aspen Parkland and the Boreal Forest, wildlife species are numerous. Moose, white tailed and mule deer, black bear, coyotes, red fox, snowshoe hare, red squirrel and ruffed grouse are common. The region also includes the northern ranges of the white-tailed jack rabbit, Richardson's, Franklin's and Thirteen striped ground squirrels, the long tailed weasel and the western jumping mouse. The gray wolf, lynx and woodland caribou may also extend southward into this region. Elk, once abundant in the area, were reintroduced by Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources in 1985.

There is an abundant and diverse bird population because of the numerous productive nesting and breeding sites in the Makwa Lakes area. Migratory birds are also present during the spring and fall migration seasons. Geese, ducks, ruffed grouse, coots, snipes and common loons are present. The common Loon is famous for its lonely, eery cries and wild laughter, especially in the spring breeding season. For many, the sounds of the Loon signify northern forest recreation and wild lake country. Makwa Lake Provincial Park is fortunate to have such an interesting and beautiful bird to be named after: "Makwa" is the Cree word for Loon. The region also contains breeding areas for colonial nesting birds such as the white pelican, double crested cormorant and great blue heron.

This great variety of wildlife is an extremely valuable recreation resource within the Makwa Lake Natural Environment Park because extensive forms of recreation activities such as hiking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, camping and nature appreciation are greatly enhanced by sightings of wildlife..

3.2.8 History

The historic interest of the Makwa Lake area can be used to the advantage of tourism and recreation in the area. On June 3, 1885, at the narrows between Upper Makwa Lake and Lower Tullibee Lake, the last military skirmish of the North West Rebellion took place. Major Samuel Steele of the North West Mounted Police, with a force of approximately 40 men, engaged a number of Plains and Woods Cree in battle. These Cree were part of a larger group fleeing from Fort Pitt with civilian hostages. The battle lasted three hours, after which both sides withdrew leaving at least four Cree dead and three of Steele's scouts wounded. After burying their dead, including Woods Cree Chief Seekaskootch, the balance of the Cree, with hostages, continued their flight north. They crossed the second narrows between Makwa and Upper Makwa Lakes and waded through densely wooded marshes. They camped on the north

shore two nights before the Woods Cree and Plains Cree separated. Big Bear's band headed south after going around the north end of Makwa Lake. The Woods Cree, with hostages, continued northward toward Lac Des Isles.

Major General Middleton returned with Steele's scouts to the scene of the battle on June 8th, 1885 and forded the narrows. Troops crossed the second narrows but were unable to make their way through the dense marsh. On June 10, General Middleton returned to Fort Pitt.

Big Bear, the Plains Cree Chief avoided all troops sent to capture him but finally surrendered on July 2, 1885 at Fort Carlton. He was found guilty of treason and served two years in prison before being released.

The skirmish between Steele's scouts, Big Bear's Plains Cree and the Woods Cree, proved to be the last military encounter of the North West Rebellion.

A provincial historic site, recently redesignated as a Provincial Historic Park, was first established at Steele Narrows in 1962. Grid Road #699 now crosses the site of the narrows where the skirmish took place. The Historic Park has cairns, information panels and maps which give further details on the battle and personalities involved. Grave markers indicate where the Indians were buried.

The trail of Big Bear's flight around the north end of Makwa Lake crosses from the reserve lands to the northern unit of the Makwa Lake Provincial Park. Camp sites and rifle pits are evident on both the Indian Reserve and within the Park. Big Bear's trail and the history of this area are important resources to be interpreted to park visitors.

Other historical points of interest within the area could include the abandoned C.N. railway grade which extended from St. Walburg to Loon Lake and efforts to drain and cross muskegs. The eroded canyon and sand delta on the east side of Makwa Lake, (one-half mile north of the Loon Lake Village on the Indian Reserve), is an interesting example of man's impact on the natural environment. Large portions of the abandoned railway grade exist within the southern unit of the Park near Perch Lake, Goose Lake and south of the Mewasin Beach development at the south end of Big Jumbo Lake. Excellent interpretive opportunities exist with these two features.

3.3 Recreational Features

Recreation Consultants and planners, the Canada Land Inventory, cottagers and tourists alike have recognized the outdoor recretion attractiveness of the Makwa Lakes area for decades. The

scenic chain of lakes, loosely interconnected in a circular manner in the forested setting, has drawn visitors for sport fishing, boating, canoeing, swimming, camping and picnicking. Steele Narrows Provincial Historic Park near the western end of the chain adds historical interest to the area.

The Canada Land Inventory identified a number of high quality sand beaches on these lakes, but the majority of the best beaches are within Loon Lake Indian Reserve #129. While the largest beaches are not on provincial crown lands, there are a number of smaller sandy beaches capable of supporting recreational activities. These include Jumbo Beach, Mewasin Beach and the Stabler Point Campground area within the Provincial Park.

The scenic mixed wood forest environment and variety of wildlife are important features for more extensive recreational activities such as hiking and cross-country skiing. The lakes will continue to attract all forms of acquatic activities as well as sport fishing. The inter-connected grouping of lakes offers great potential for canoeing, especially the smaller Tullibee and Jumbo Lakes. Public access to these lakes, as well as to Perch Lake and Goose Lake in the extreme southwest corner of the Park, is an important feature.

As a Natural Environment Park, great emphasis will be placed upon the protection of the natural ecosystems represented within the Park. This area is representative of the Thickwood Uplands Natural Region of Saskatchewan in terms of the rolling morainic hills, the mixed wood forests of aspen poplar-white spruce and jack pine, the swamp and bog communities (at the north end of Makwa Lake) and the characteristic habitat for a variety of wildlife. Interpretation of these features will be important, as well as their protection.

The combination of recreational and natural features found in this area will continue to attract increasing numbers of visitors from west central Saskatchewan and east central Alberta. These features warranted the planned development and protective resource management associated with Provincial Park status.

3.3.1 Units of the Park

Makwa Lake Provincial Park has two separate units: a northern (Pine Cove) unit between Highway 26 and Makwa Lake at the north end of the lake; and a larger, southern unit providing access to Makwa, Perch, Goose and the Jumbo Lakes. Each unit has distinct and different features.

The northern unit is less developed for recreational use and tourists but it provides a direct visual contact with the excellent resources that lie west and south of Highway 26. A scenic viewpoint associated with the Pine Cove site can be an important communication and interpretive feature. This unit

contains elements of the 1885 North West Rebellion including the trail of Big Bear, the Plains Cree Chief, following the skirmish at Steele Narrows. Rifle pits can be found near their campsite on the northwest side of the lake. The physiographic features of this unit of the Park are different from the southern unit where the edge of the higher Missouri Coteau and Thickwood Uplands are distinctly visible.

The southern unit of the Park contains the existing recreational developments at Jumbo Beach, Stabler Point and Mewasin Beach. It surrounds the private cottage subdivisions on Makwa Lake and Little Jumbo Lakes, and includes the cross-country skiing and hiking trails south of the Jumbo Lakes. It also includes the area, considered for many years by local residents, as a potential golf course.

The topographic relief of the southern unit is much greater than the northern unit, with forested rolling hills and intervening sloughs and depressions offering a greater scenic variety. The presence of spruce, jack pine, birch and other species adds much to the interest of the aspen forests. Wildlife populations and the accessibility to five lakes are significant features of this unit. The presence of the abandoned CN Railway grade can be utilized to advantage for interpretation of cultural impacts on the natural environment. (For example, the severe erosion of the sandy plain north of the village of Loon Lake and the resultant sand delta on the east shore of Makwa Lake.) Interpretation of the impact of fire suppression on the natural succession of forests and other natural features can be undertaken in this unit of the Park as well.

Improvement to recreational facilities, services and programming will be undertaken in a planned and co-ordinated manner, recognizing the natural capabilities and limitations of the natural environment. Figure 3 illustrates the location of significant elements of the Park.

3.3.2 Park Boundaries

3.4 Recreational Use

3.4.1 Existing Use

Visitation to the former Makwa Lake Recreation Site increased over forty percent over the past decade, 1976-1985. In 1984, of all park lands in the province, Makwa Lake ranked eleventh in use. Campground use increased slowly but steadily over this same period, with the average length of stay also increasing slightly. Table 1 below summarizes camping statistics at Makwa Lake, prior to becoming a Provincial Park.

Table 1 Total Camper-Days

Year	1976	1978	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Camper Days	27,600	28,443	32,017	30,136	31,012	31,903	34,372	35,212

Over the entire summer season the campground occupancy averaged 33.5 percent in 1984 and 1985, with occupancy highest in July on weekends (72.5% of the total 256 available sites).

Camping use from Lloydminster and Alberta has increased considerably since access roads were improved from the south and west. The main recreational activities include camping, boating, fishing and swimming in the summer and cross-country skiing in winter. Cottaging is an important recreational land use in the area, adjacent to the Provincial Park and on the nearby Loon Lake Indian Reserve. (There are now approximately 350 cottages in the Makwa Lake area.)

3.4.1.1 Available Facilities

Development of public facilities within the southern unit of the Park includes three distinct areas: Stabler Point, the main campground and day-use area; Jumbo Beach day-use and beach area; and Mewasin Beach. A fourth small area, the Pine Cove camp and picnic ground adjacent to Highway 26 and the Pine Cove Resort subdivision, is not within the Provincial Park.

The Pine Cove site was originally established as a scenic viewpoint and pull-off for tourists travelling Highway 26. It is a very small site elevated 75 feet above the lake, with limited potential for anything but a scenic viewpoint. It is sandwiched between the private Pine Cove Resort development and cottage subdivision, and is used as an unserviced 6 unit campsite and roadside picnic site. Drinking water (well), barbecue stands, picnic tables, pump out toilets, kitchen shelter, fish filleting facilities, play apparatus, and firewood are provided at the site. Access to the shoreline is too steep for boat launching, but a trail leads down to the shoreline from the gravelled parking lot. This site can continue to be used to promote the facilities and features of the nearby Provincial Park.

The main public development within the Provincial Park has taken place at Stabler Point, the most north-easterly portion of the large peninsula extending into the west side of Little Jumbo Lake. The 220 unit campground is served by two public beaches, one on each side of the point, facing north and south. The beach facing north is used extensively for swimming and beach oriented activities. The south facing beach is used mainly for boat launching and docking. A modern campground service center (toilets, sinks, showers) with parking area is centrally located. A boat launch, dock, fish cleaning tables, playgrounds, drinking water, firewood, toilets and other typical campsite facilities are provided. (93 of the 220 campsites are electrified.)

The Jumbo Beach Campground, adjacent to the main access road along the east side of Little Jumbo Lake, similarly has very limited facility development. Water, toilets, camp kitchen, and parking lot serve the 18 unit campground along the lakeshore. A modern changehouse equipped with running water and toilet facilities is located in the Jumbo Beach day-use area.

The Mewasin Beach Campground at the south end of Big Jumbo lake has only limited camping and day-use facilities. A camp kitchen and pump-out toilets are located central to twelve campsites. A small parking area and unserviced change house and drinking water (well) and picnic area are provided behind the excellent swimming beach.

Camping fees are charged at all sites. An administration office, a group campsite, and 15 km. of cross-country ski/hiking trails are also provided. Dining room, and other confectionary/food services and boat rentals are available at the nearby cottage subdivisions/resorts.

3.4.1.2 Recreation Use and Trends

Use of the Makwa Lake area for summer outdoor recreation activities has continued to grow in relation to its improved accessibility and the knowledge of its excellent natural attractiveness. Most of the attractiveness in the past was related to water-oriented activities (fishing, swimming, boating, canoeing) but a number of associated land-based facilities have been added or have potential to be added. These include cottaging, camping, picnicking, scenic viewing, hiking and nature interpretation. Year-round use of cottages is becoming more common throughout the province and winter activities such as cross-country skiing have become much more popular.

Experience elsewhere suggests that increased use and visitation normally follow designation as a Provincial Park. Improved services to the campgrounds and day-use areas will also prove more attractive to visitors, encouraging them to come more often or stay longer. Such improvements and Provincial Park status

may also encourage tourists off the Yellowhead Route at North Battleford or Lloydminster and attract more visitors from the larger centers of Edmonton and Saskatoon.

The addition of new facilities such as a golf course may be most significant for residents of the local market area, including the large summer population staying at cottages in commercial accommodations and in campgrounds. There have been local efforts to establish a golf course at Loon Lake for many years, and a Golf and Country Club has been formed to actively promote and undertake development of a course within the proposed Park area. (One area that has been under consideration is southeast of the access road to the Mewasin Beach Campground.)

Additional and improved cross-country ski trails could supplement the existing trails. The Alder Trail (4.6 km.), Birch Trail (4.8 km.), Poplar Trail (2.4 km.) and Pine Trail (3.2 km.) are located south and east of Big Jumbo Lake. No statistics are available on their current use, but trends elsewhere suggest this winter activity will continue to increase in popularity.

Considering the size of the Park and the accessibility of a number of lakes, the resources are capable of satisfying additional recreational demands. Summer use is currently limited more by lack of services and promotion than by the resource base itself. For a period of approximately fifteen years, (since 1970), the provincial government has consciously attempted to encourage cottage development on the adjacent Indian Reserve to create employment and revenue opportunities for Band members. This was in recognition of the Loon Lake Indian Band's Development Company and administration of the Makwa Lake Resort (formerly Longdo's Beach). Development of the Provincial Park and increasing visitation to the area will continue to improve economic opportunities in the vicinity, both on the Indian Lands, and in the Village of Loon Lake.

Demands for all types of outdoor recreation are expected to increase in the future. While winter recreation will continue to grow in popularity, the summer season will continue to be the dominant period of use.

3.4.1.3 Resource Use and Trends

The crown lands within the Provincial Park were originally administered by the Department of Agriculture. Due to their greater potential for wildlife, forestry and recreational uses, rather than agriculture, the lands were transferred to the administration of the Department of Natural Resources in 1960. Recreation development within the area, including cottage subdivisions, campgrounds, day-use/beach areas and boat access to the lakes, was undertaken by DNR over the past 25 years. The long term potential of the area for park and recreation purposes has been recognized for some time but concerns over potential conflicts

in use of the renewable resources needed to be resolved. Renewable and Non-Renewable Resource related activities in the former Recreation Site included angling, hunting, trapping, grazing and sand extraction.

There was concern for the forest resources and their potential importance for pulp harvesting, wildlife habitat, recreation and watershed management. As renewable resources, the lakes, the forests, fisheries and wildlife all require controlled use and careful management. As a Natural Environment Park, special consideration will be given to protecting those natural resources which are characteristic of the ecology of the area.

Despite the attractiveness of the area for outdoor recreation activities, preservation of the natural resource base and characteristic geographical, geological, or biological features which are of special public value or interest, will not be jeopardized. For the most part, natural processes will be allowed to continue within the majority of the Park with little interference by the activities of people.

While the protection of the natural environment will be a primary objective of the Makwa Lake Provincial Park, the public will be encouraged to visit the Park and to experience and enjoy the out-of-doors in all seasons. More intensive uses will be permitted only where resources permit. All development of facilities and on-site management of the Park will be undertaken with due consideration of the natural values of the Park and the desired experience of the visitor.

3.4.2 Potential Benefits and Use

3.4.2.1 Resource Protection and Interpretation

Establishment of the Makwa Lake Provincial Park will ensure the protection of suitable representative portions of the natural environment of the area. Both units of the Park are representative of different ecological communities and geographical features. The northern portion, though seemingly less attractive from an outdoor recreation viewpoint, is important for protection of the northern lakeshore environment and wildlife habitat. The Park will serve as a buffer between the lake and cultural impacts of agriculture, transportation and human settlement.

The southern unit will protect representative portions of the Thickwood Uplands Natural Region of the province as well distinctly visible and scenically attractive features such as the edge of the Missouri Coteau, the rolling morainic hills, the mixed wood forest and the smaller lakes and depressional areas.

Both units of the Park will ensure future public access to and enjoyment of the lakes in the area. Some areas such as the bogs and depressions are protected by their inherent inability to attract or support recreational activity. Other areas may require

limited or controlled use due to soils, topographic or other sensitivities.

Extensive forms of recreation can be pursued within the Park where impacts on the natural resources will not be negative. Proper, planned placement, development and maintenance of support facilities would protect the natural environment and guard against misuse of the more sensitive areas.

Interpretation of the Makwa Lake environment, including the native flora and fauna, as well as geologic, historic and cultural features within the Park and elsewhere in the region, would add to the visitor's appreciation and understanding of the Park. While the natural attractiveness of the lakes, the forests, the wildlife and the sport fishing will continue to attract visitors to the area, interpretive facilities, developed trails and markers, and public communication of the resource management and protection strategies will add significantly to the quality of their experience.

3.4.2.2 Outdoor Recreation Benefits

The former Makwa Lake Recreation Site, now the Makwa Lake Provincial Park, was consistently one of the most popular recreation areas in the province. Camping, cottaging and day-use activities have been extremely popular due to the natural attractiveness of the chain of lakes, the forests, wildlife and sport fishery.

Establishment of a Provincial Park in the Makwa Lakes area will serve to further increase the area's ability to attract and retain visitors, particularly when accompanied by a higher level of recreational and interpretive services and facilities. Increasing awareness and appreciation of the Makwa Lake resources will lead to increasing public pressures for improvements and additional services.

The creation of this Provincial Park will benefit the entire population of west central Saskatchewan in terms of ensuring quality out-of-doors recreational experiences in both summer and winter. Preservation and interpretation of the Thickwood Uplands natural environment will provide improved opportunities for nature-oriented recreation experiences. Nature study, hiking, scenic appreciation, camping, canoeing, photography, cross-country skiing, fishing, picnicking and swimming are expected to remain as important activities.

3.4.2.3 Tourism Benefits

The Park will become an important site for tourists who are passing through the region either travelling north from the Yellowhead route towards the large Meadow Lake Provincial Park or north-eastward from Alberta centers. The combined Bronson

Forest-Makwa Lake-Meadow Lake parks and region can have a very significant appeal for visitors if services and facilities are developed to acceptable levels. The total region has the natural potential to become an important attraction on a national scale. The variety of summer and winter recreational activities possible within the Park, overnight camping and other forms of accommodation, sport fishing and hunting in the region, combined with the natural scenic attractiveness of the area will make this Park a natural place for tourists to visit for short or extended periods of time.

Although the Park will not necessarily be a major tourist destination area by itself, the improvements and promotion associated with its new Provincial Park status will benefit the economy of the entire Makwa Lake region. Private commercial operators and nearby communities will benefit from the expected increase in tourism in the future.

4. FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

Makwa Lake Provincial Park will require a long range development plan to ensure that the goals and objectives associated with the new "Natural Environment" classification are satisfied. A park management strategy will be an essential element as none currently exists. Protection of the natural environment must be balanced with the need to provide services and facilities for increasing numbers of visitors to the Park.

Communications, promotion, signing and interpretation of the Park will have to be addressed, both within the Park and throughout the immediate market area.

Demands for improved campgrounds, day-use facilities, a golf course, additional cross-country ski trails, year-round rental accommodation, permanent park administration facilities, hiking trails and access to more remote areas such as Perch Lake and Goose Lake will have to be addressed in the resource management and planning processes. Zoning within the Park will designate areas of controlled recreation use and areas of maximum natural resource protection. The roles of public and private opportunities will also be examined in terms of the long term goals and objectives of the Park. Of particular interest will be the future relationship of the Provincial Park to the existing and future development of adjacent Indian Reserve lands.

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